

Editorial: Literature, Drama, & Language Teaching

Over the centuries the use of literature and drama has been inextricably tied to language teaching. For years the majority of teachers of English came to the classroom with a background in literature, which was a driving motivation for learning English in the first place. Gradually, literature, which was largely based on written texts, began to take a back seat in classes focusing on speaking. As learning English has spread beyond English departments, attracting students and teachers from diverse backgrounds, some teachers have wondered how they can engage practically minded students in activities related to the arts. Regardless of the purpose for studying English, students find that the use of arts in the classroom opens up a creative side and meets some of the deepest needs of the student. Literature deals with our innermost concerns and allows us to escape the limits of our immediate surroundings as we create our own imaginary world. Many teachers have commented that when students play appropriate roles, their fluency rises dramatically or a heavy accent may even disappear. Teachers have often stated that literature represents the best that the language can offer. Literature, film, film posters and reviews are all examples of authentic material rich in cultural and historical content, which leads to a variety of activities. The articles in this issue demonstrate various ways in which teachers can incorporate the arts in the classroom. Even teachers who feel uncomfortable role-playing or organizing such activities can find a sample of activities in the articles which will add spice and variety to the language lesson. The variety of activities maintains student interest and involves students with different learning styles.

In her front article, Ghosn provides detailed lesson plans, procedures, and materials for enacting a whole language lesson based on a children's story. In the first "News and Ideas" article, Swift describes the steps to setting up a successful theater festival, in his case at a national level. Luczak and Stanulewicz show how one can use short mini-sagas to encourage students to read and to use English creatively. Although the idea of using songs in the classroom is not new, Orlova describes a systematic way of using songs and provides a sample of creative exercises. Al-Saadat and Afifi describe the specific advantages of using role-plays in paternal societies in which students may be inhibited by the authority of the teacher. De Porto describes the procedure for using simulations in the classroom and provides specific examples which we can try in our classrooms. Basanta provides specific lesson plan activities to use with film posters she has developed. Bencherab and Tahar Berrabah describe an activity with variations for using fables. Our "Teacher Resources" page features books dealing with drama or literature including the newest USIA publication *Being People*.

This issue introduces our new "Civic Education" page. In this page we will try to include creative ways of teaching about American society and values. As a prerequisite for understanding the U.S., we must know about its geography and history. Pages 58 and 59 introduce an information gap activity which helps students learn more about the states and major cities. Each student has a map of the western half of the U.S. but with different information. Students can complete their maps only by sharing the information with their partners. The October issue will include the same activity using the eastern half of the States.

Our October and January issues will be devoted to content-based learning. The articles will show how to apply content-based activities in an EFL setting, what stages one needs to consider when designing content-based packages, and how one can design successful projects for students of different ages. Specific lesson plans will be described in such diverse fields as environmental studies and English for specific purposes.

As this issue of the *Forum* reaches you, a new set of thunderous dinosaurs from *The Lost World* may be crashing through local movie screens. We pay tribute to Steven Spielberg in our "Idiom" and "Lighter Side" pages, with reviews of his most successful films and a chart showing how his films compare to the most successful American movies of all time.